



Clean Water Fund - Private Well Protection

Fiscal Impact (\$000s)	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
Clean Water Fund				
Expenditures	325	325	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Net Fiscal Impact	325	325	0	0

Summary

This proposal seeks to ensure safe drinking water by funding a study of private well water quality. Current data on private well water quality are limited because testing depends on an owner's initiative and vigilance, in contrast to highly monitored public water supplies. The study will help identify factors affecting water quality, and will support outreach to owners and contractors.

Background

Private wells are required to be sampled for nitrate, arsenic and bacteria at the time of construction. Results from this sampling indicates approximately 11 percent exceed the arsenic drinking water standard and just under one percent exceed the nitrate drinking water standards. The water from new wells is required to test negative for bacteria before being used.

Proposal

The private well study will use existing private well monitoring networks and data, supplemented by targeted sampling, to characterize the occurrence and magnitude of contaminants in private wells.

Activities will include:

- Follow-up testing of water from private wells to evaluate changes in nitrate and arsenic concentrations over time.
- Testing selected private wells for radium and manganese to determine distribution and potential health risk of these contaminants.
- Evaluation of existing and new well data and geology to determine geological and well construction influences on contaminant occurrences.

Based on the evaluation, information and guidance will be developed. For well contractors, guidance will be developed for well placement and construction standards to minimize risks. For well owners, outreach efforts will be developed to increase the ability to identify and address potential issues. This will include water testing recommendations, well maintenance and treatment for specific water quality issues.

Rationale

Protecting private well owners from contamination risk supports the MDH Vision and Mission goal to make physical environments safe and healthy. Private wells supply drinking water for 1.1 million Minnesotans - 20 percent of the state population.

For more information:

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Although testing is required for nitrate and arsenic, the standards have regulatory authority only for public water supplies and not private wells. Follow up sampling or treatment is the responsibility of the well owner. Most wells are not sampled for any other contaminants and many older wells have never been sampled for any contaminants.

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